

## The Specter's Haunting: Fantastic Crossings in *Frankenstein*

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I have found it! What terrified me will terrify others; And I need only describe the spectre which had haunted my midnight pillow.

— Mary Shelley, "Introduction [1831]" to *Frankenstein*<sup>1)</sup>

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1) For textual references for Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein: The Modern Prometheus*, I use both the 1818 "original" and the 1831 editions, while I follow the 1818 text's punctuation. I refer to D. L. Macdonald and Scherf's edition for the 1818 edition, although I have consulted Rieger's edition. For the 1831 edition, I use Hindle's 1985 Penguin classics edition. All subsequent references to these editions are given between parentheses in the text, in the order of the volume number, chapter number, and page number of the 1818 version, followed by the chapter number and page number of the 1831 edition in brackets. When there is a discrepancy between the two texts, I try to show both versions whenever possible, except

주 제 어: 프로메테우스주의와 괴물성의 경계선들, 근대적 주체로서의 괴물, 창작 주체로서의 여성, 모성의 타자성, 시선의 교차점들, 사이보그론  
**the boundaries of Prometheanism and monsterty; the monster as the modern subject; female authorship; the maternal other; the crossing of the gazes; cyborgianism**

## 1. The *Frankenstein* Effects

My person, with its human powers and features, seem to me a monstrous  
excrecence of nature.

— Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*<sup>2)</sup>

With the possibility of human cloning lurking around the corner, Mary Shelley's nearly two-centuries old "hideous phantom" seems more real than ever. By now, films, TV dramas, and science fiction novels have generated so many cultural products evoking the Frankensteinian monster that western popular culture is inundated with a vast array of shocking to banal sub-human creatures, techno-monsters, and vampiric "living-deads." Shelley fittingly labeled her creature "the transient existence of the hideous corpse" in her 1831 "Introduction." Indeed, *Frankenstein* leads us to the intersection of multiple temporal modalities: the past — opened up by the publication of the novel, the first fiction "transgress[ing] the laws of credibility" (Walter Scott's assessment in Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine* 2 [1818], 613); the present — the site of its current consumption and numerous "spin-offs"; and the future — an increasingly "real," imaginary site of lab-created human beings and concomitant new social relations. For the contemporary reader, the implications of the novel are twofold. The novel's much-copied original concept still triggers our fascination because of its deep insight into our innermost desires/fears; and because we are always already entrenched in

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differences in punctuation; and when the 1831 edition is the sole source, I indicate it by using brackets alone.

2) Mary Shelley, *The Last Man*, ed. Hugh J. Luke, Jr. (Lincoln and London: U of Nebraska P, 1965), 340.

cyberculture — with its power of limitless multiplication, genetic en/decoding and virtual *anything* — we cannot situate the moment of the monster's "birth" in our collective imagination properly.

To the contemporary reader of *Frankenstein*, temporal crossings occur when popular notions of the *Frankenstein* theme interface with the actual facets of the novel. The most common misconception is that the "proper" name of the protagonist (Victor) Frankenstein, designated in the subtitle "the Modern Prometheus," is the name of the monster. Such popular misconceptions exaggerate, twist, and sometimes obscure the subtleties and complexities of the novel; but at the same time, they also shed light on its intriguing topoi of multiple "monstrosity." Indeed, what is in the name "Frankenstein" but a doubling of the protagonist's proper name and its displacement? As a savage counterpart of Milton's Adam, the monster has stolen and appropriated the creator's identity. In fact, the disfigured creature has grown to achieve mythic stature, while Victor Frankenstein, dwarfed by the weight of his overwhelming creature, has been relegated to the status of notorious agent, mad/evil scientist.<sup>3)</sup> Distinguished from the monster only by his title of "Doctor," Victor cannot shed madness as one of his defining

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3) Sterrenburg chronicles a series of popular journalistic adaptations of the monster character appropriated to agitate populist sentiments. As early as 1833, engraver James Parry's illustration entitled "Reform Bill's First Step Among His Political Frankensteins" depicts a giant devil (the monster) as the embodiment of the Reform Bill that appears to menace the creators of the bill (Frankensteins). It is John Tenniel's sarcastic cartoons for *The Punch, or the London Charivari*, however, that anticipate most the reversal in the Frankenstein-monster relationship. Tenniel's "The Brummagem Frankenstein" (1866) and "the Irish Frankenstein" (1882) both show a giant "Frankenstein" figure dwarfing the creator, arousing the fear and conservatism of the British reader. See Sterrenburg, especially, 166-171.

characteristics. The reversal of the main characters' fortunes in popular culture illustrates the same (re-)creational nightmare that originates in the novel — the creature's usurpation of the creator.

After we absorb the compelling doubleness of grandness and monstrosity and discover the monster lurks within (not just among) us, we cannot help but notice and be disturbed by the blurriness of lines between the Enlightenment and madness, and logic and violence. The literary-cultural hybrid Shelley called "hideous progeny" embodies multiple crossings and mutations, encompassing (mis)readings, appropriations, and subversions. To address these highly charged and complex crossings, this paper casts multiple nets of investigation. First, it examines the historicity of the monster and the propagation of monster figures, while exploring various dimensions of the fantastic and the Other. Second, it explores the impact of the writer's gender that adds to the textual effects: what are the implications of the fact that a woman writer probes and disrupts the boundaries of Prometheanism and monsterism and of monstrosity and femininity? Third, while exploring the boundaries between fantastic, spectral, and psychical realms, Shelley also problematizes the junctures between the human and the mechanical. Thus *Frankenstein* provokes us to pursue the Foucauldian insight of the nearing end of "man," as we face the possibility that what is human and what is inhuman will effortlessly mutate into each other.

## 2. Between the Modern Subject and the Void

Shelley's ground-breaking use of scientific knowledge to create a full-fledged life composed of adult body parts (the underlying concept of the cloning experiment) draws attention to the historical significance of its

“originating” moment. It correlates with the rich textual ramifications in which the monster, over time, has been interpreted as a stand-in for various socio-political forces of the time, including the Enlightenment, the French Revolution, the colonial subject under European imperialism, and so on.<sup>4)</sup> The population debate in the late eighteenth century fostered philosophico-scientific discourse on reproductive power.<sup>5)</sup> The public’s curiosity about the intricate workings of the human body (also manifested by the increasing fascination with automata) resonates not only in *Frankenstein* but in an array of contemporary European texts, including E.T.A. Hoffmann’s “Sandman” (1816) which features a deceptively human automaton and Felix Bodain’s *The Novel of the Future* (1834). It was high time that a writer tackle the subject of scientific exploration, especially its cultural and psychical underpinnings.<sup>6)</sup>

While (post-)modern readers can see that the novel’s investigation into

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4) For an informative exploration of the Enlightenment discourse and the French Republicanism in *Frankenstein*, see Hirsch. Paulson’s chapter on *Frankenstein* in *Representations of Revolution* is a seminal discussion of the subject.

5) Malthus, through his provocative *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798), led the debate on overpopulation, in which William Godwin was also one of the major participants. In 1820 Godwin published *Of Population ... an Answer to Mr. Malthus’s Essay on That Subject*. See Young-ok An, “The Double Formations of the Colonial Masculine Subjectivity,” *Studies in English Literature* 5 (1997): 139-64 for a detailed treatment of the juxtapositions amongst Walton, Henry, and Victor in terms of their shared position as British colonialists.

6) Many of the recent subversive and alternative readings from feminist and psychoanalytical perspectives are possible through analyzing such textual clues that intersect the psychical and the social. See Gilbert and Gubar, Poovey, Johnson, Mellor (1988 [1]), Levine and Knoepfelmacher, Jackson, Homans, and Dolar.

the making and unmaking of “the modern Prometheus” leads to the monstrous “other” of the Enlightenment project, situating the monster in his historical context requires more than seeing him just as a (disfigured) embodiment of the Rousseauian noble savage.<sup>7)</sup> In this regard, Slavoj Žižek presents a thought-provoking suggestion: the monster, paradoxically, is “the pure subject” of the Enlightenment. Looking into *the fantasy structure* that generates monstrous figures, Žižek articulates the symbolic economy of Enlightenment discourse:

The emergence of the empty surface on which phantasmagorical monsters appear is [...] strictly correlative to what Heidegger calls “the advent of Modern-Age-subjectivity,” i.e., to the epoch in which the symbolic “substance” (the “big Other” *qua* texture of symbolic tradition) can no longer contain the subject, can no longer bind him to its symbolic mandate. This cutting off of substantial tradition is the constitutive gesture of Enlightenment: in this sense, *the “monster” is the subject of the Enlightenment*, that is to say, the mode in which the subject of the Enlightenment acquires his impossible positive existence. (1992, 134; emphasis in the original)<sup>8)</sup>

How can this figure of violence and monstrosity be the very subject of the Enlightenment rationality? As Žižek sees it, the Enlightenment supposition of itself as an annihilating force of the ancient regime and a reconstitution of an absolutely new structure required it then to smooth out the void it had located. In that sense, the monster is “the ‘missing link’ between nature and culture,” an “‘answer to the real’ to the Enlightenment’s endeavor to find a

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7) For an analysis of Mary Shelley’s “revision” of the Rousseauist idea of “natural man,” see O’Rourke.

8) Also see Chapter 4, “Why does the Phallus Appear?” 114-146.

bridge,” for cultured people to simultaneously conserve their “unspoiled nature” (Zizek, 1992, 136). The monster’s “fantasmatic appearance” reasserts that the gap cannot be positivized, precisely because it is the emptiness the Enlightenment has presupposed. In this vein, Zizek argues that the Enlightenment discourse of the origin is nothing other than an attempt to fill neatly the inevitable void. Furthermore, the ambiguity of the Enlightenment lies precisely in such contradiction: the very proliferation of the origin discourse (origin of language, of culture, of society, etc.) in the Enlightenment period is the symptomatic reversal of “a fundamental prohibition, the prohibition to probe too deeply into the obscure origins, which betrays a fear that by doing so, one might uncover something monstrous [...]” (136). That monstrous lack manifests itself in the form of haunting surplus energies that cannot be contained inside social boundaries and categorical identities. In fact, “the subject” could be seen as nothing but “the surplus” that cannot be subjected to the social, or the nonsubstance that “ex-sists only as nonsubstantial self-relating which maintains its distance from inner-worldly objects”; yet in monsters, “this subject encounters the Thing which is his impossible equivalent — the monster is the subject himself, conceived as Thing” (137; emphasis in the original). Here the Lacan’s insight into the subject-object relationship converges with that of Foucault. Foucault’s interrogation of the proximity of the normal and the pathological suggests that whenever scientific rationality champions the logic of normalization and exclusion based on a dualistic logic, it invites more *disfigured others*.<sup>9)</sup>

Literary-cultural texts of the late eighteenth- to the early nineteenth-

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9) In *Madness and Civilization*, Foucault interrogates the discourse of scientific rationality that champions the logic of normalcy and exclusion based on binary

century record the surfacing of various monstrous figures in diverse forms, including John Stedman's inchoate "vampire or spectre of Guiana," William Blake's spectres and emanations, Hoffmann's woman vampire, S.T. Coleridge's and John Keats' figures of fantastic creatures and dreamy snake-women, and John Polidori's vampire (later elaborated in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*).<sup>10</sup> The nervous anxiety of colonialist ambition, coupled with a recognition of the unknown aspect of the "new land" that Europeans purported to penetrate, seems to have congealed into disfigured and menacing creatures. These spectral, monstrous figures haunted the rational(izing) technologico-imperialist drives to the extent they became a traceable literary-cultural undercurrent. In a sense, the Conradian "heart of

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logic. It is through "another kind of madness" that the "sovereign rationality and reason" relegate "Reason and Madness to one side or the other of its action as things henceforth external, deaf to all exchange, and as though dead to one another" (ix).

10) See A. Smith's engraving (dated 1791) of "the Vampire or Spectre of Guiana" for John Gabriel Stedman's *Narrative*. The concept of Blake's Spectre stems from 16th century notions of "apparition, phantom, or ghost, especially one of terrifying nature or aspect." See Keynes, 62. The "insane, and most deform'd" Blakean Spectre resides in the fallen world within the characters. Blake's Spectres and Coleridge's various monstrous figures share a fundamentally Freudian feature of the Döppelgänger. A passage from *Ancient Mariner* is quoted in *Frankenstein*: "[...] he knows, a frightful fiend / Doth close behind him tread." Rose highlights the theme of the double in Blake's works, considering the Spectre "the dark half of the soul divided into a seemingly separate and independent being" and arguing that Blake thus anticipates "Romanticism's interest in the double" (130, 138). As for Keats, the fascinating, yet monstrous, fairy-tale figures in "La Belle Dame Sans Merci" and *Lamia* are the most well-known forms tinged with spectrality. Byron's and Sade's evocations of the vampirism associated with femaleness can be understood similarly.



darkness" was operating in the early part of the nineteenth century.<sup>11)</sup>

As the void, the un-dead, and the "thing," the nameless monster embodies the burden of British colonialism at the heart of the Enlightenment project. Indeed, the creature never dies in the novel, despite his proclamation following Victor's death that "I shall die, and what I now feel be no longer felt. Soon these burning miseries will be extinct. I shall ascend my funeral pile triumphantly, and exult in the agony of the torturing flames" (Walton's Letter, 247 [265]). The reader is left with Walton's final report: the monster "was borne away by the waves, and lost in darkness and distance."<sup>12)</sup> Yet the text has already made clear that Victor recognizes at some level that the monster is his own vampire, which has originated within him:

I considered the being whom I had cast among mankind, and endowed with the will and power to effect purposes of horror, such as the deed which he had now done, nearly in the light of my own vampire, my own spirit let loose from the grave, and forced to destroy all that was dear to me. (6. 105 [7. 74])

As a vampiric figure, the monster *cannot die*, almost despite himself, and his uncontainable desire suspends a comfortable closure — his self-immolation — for all. Such discrepancy between intent and action is not an insignificant one, considering Shelley's poignant remarks in the "Introduction" to the 1831 edition of *Frankenstein*: "[Victor] *would hope* ... that this thing which had received such imperfect animation would subside

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11) See Alan Bewell, *Romanticism and Colonial Disease*.

12) Morretti sees the vampire figure in *Dracula* as the embodiment of capital, yet differentiates it from *Frankenstein's* monster, whom Morretti considers an allegory of the working class.

into dead matter ...” (emphasis added).

As Victor notes, “it [the monster] became *a thing*” from the assembly of body parts when the creation process was finished (106; emphasis added). And just as he recognizes this transformative moment, Victor averts himself from this “thing” and deserts the lab; but when the monster returns to Victor in the sublime Alps, the monster shows the full force of anamorphic stretching and shrinking, from “gigantic stature” to “a filthy daemon” and “a depraved wretch” to “[Victor’s] own vampire” (6. 104-5 [10. 144-5]). This sublimely monstrous “thing” is at once marked by the gazer’s ambition and fear, correlating, interestingly, with Žizek’s “sublime thingness.”

### 3. Masculine Subjectivity: Between Victor and the Monster

Man is an invention which the archaeology of our thought can easily  
show to be of recent date. And perhaps to be nearing its end.

— Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things*

While Žizek keenly analyzes the monster’s subjectivity, his description of the monster figure as the “pure subject” of the Enlightenment seems to elide the interpellation of gender ideology that operates in the monster’s mind. The monster’s subject identification process (his repetition of Victor) leads him to emerge as a masculine subject proper, more and more assimilated to the cultured male position, rather than remain as something other, or something radically different. In other words, the monster’s evolution as the masculine subject is a repetition of, rather than a rupture from, Victor’s development to the extent that they each struggle to “make use of his own understanding without the guidance of another” (Kant’s definition of the

Enlightenment). The monster's discovery of Victor's journal (which contains the process of forming *knowledge* about the life-giving experiment as well as a detailed description of the application of such knowledge) compels him to seek knowledge [9. 137]. In that sense, the monster also repeats Victor's quest for knowledge.

From the perspective of the outsider who identifies himself with the "imagined community," the monster imposes his "humanity" (his espousal of membership in a society which always already excludes him) in the only way he finds effective. His violent acts ultimately point at the discursive apparatuses that keep the logic of insider/outsider intact: it is through exclusion that a social structure is maintained, even if there is only an undefinable void in its center. In other words, the automatic rejection of the monster by the "human" (European) community (Victor's instantaneous revulsion, the young de Lacey's horror-ridden reaction to the monster's "invasion" of their home,<sup>13</sup> William's "innocent" refusal to like him), demonstrates the *productive* nature of the cultural policing mechanism that "naturally" and effectively shuts out the outsider. The monster's *modest* proposal for his own happiness ("misery made me a fiend. Make me happy, and I shall again be virtuous"; II. 2. 128 [10. 146]) is therefore a demand that can never be met, unless Victor (who assumes the guardianship of humanity on the frontier) transgresses the naturalized value system he

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13) Marshall explains "the *drame bourgeois*, or *tragédie larmoyante* of the de Lacey family" depicted by the monster, "the *spectateur ignoré*." Marshall points out that the de Lacey family suggests the model of bourgeois family that was confirmed and frustrated, and that the whole picture could unfold itself by the monster repeating it with Victor's participation (214). I suggest that this "sympathy" shows the limits of bourgeois humanism itself, which rejected absolutely the monster's appeal for inclusion.

firmly espouses.<sup>14)</sup> His treatment of the monster corresponds with the way British culture exercised colonial domination — through establishing and maintaining identities by exclusion, and through constituting colonial sites and objects as other.

The cultural operation is indeed relentless to the extent that “those whom repressive culture has held at a distance can easily enough become its most diehard defenders” (Adorno 53). The monster himself internalizes laws and concepts of beauty and “monstrosity” through Eurocentric lenses. At first, the monster sees language acquisition as a way to “enable [him] to make humans overlook the deformity of [his] figure.” True to *Prometheus Unbound’s* declaration that “[Prometheus] gave man speech, and speech created thought, / Which is the measure of the universe” (II. 4. 72), the monster’s self-education in language and culture leads him to subject himself to the symbolic chain, even to the point of recognizing himself as the other. This process of interpellation is vividly illustrated in the following scene:

I had admired the perfect forms of my cottagers — their grace, beauty, and delicate complexions: but how was I terrified, when I viewed myself in a

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14) The naturalized dominant culture interpellates *both* Victor and the monster: Victor subscribes to Eurocentric hegemony, and the monster follows the logic of the Rousseauist “natural law.” Rousseau’s famous thesis (*Second Discourse*) poses questions such as what is the origin of inequality among men, and whether it is authorized by natural laws. According to Rousseau, “man in a state of nature” is free of disease and filled with “natural compassion,” which is “the pure emotion of nature, prior to all kinds of reflection” (67). Shelley seems to provide an oblique critique of Rousseauist principle, especially through young William’s hostile treatment of the monster.

transparent pool! At first I started back, unable to believe that it was indeed I who was reflected in the mirror; and when I became fully convinced that *I was in reality the monster that I am*, I was filled with the bitterest sensations of despondence and mortification. Alas! I did not yet entirely know the fatal effects of this miserable deformity. (II. 4. 142 [12. 159]; emphasis added)

This scene (evocative of the Lacanian mirror-stage to the modern reader) illustrates the formation of the monster's ego — the ideological moment when he “recognizes” himself through a specular relation. While the monster teaches himself language through secretly participating in the cottagers' education of Safie, a Turkish woman, he also teaches himself the symbolic structure of cultural identification. In other words, the monster's image of himself (as deformed) is defined by the difference of his appearance from those of the idealized cottagers (the dominant culture). In this sense, his recognition of self-monstrosity is nothing but the mirroring of symbolic encodings.<sup>15)</sup> The structuring of the ego and desire derived from a splitting of the subject into conscious and unconscious parts demarcates the individual within the social by means of identification and language. While Žižek elucidates the monster as the surplus and the void located between nature and culture, emphasizing the monster's “refusal” to accept the mirrored form as a crucial example, we need to consider the twofold nature of the shift made in the monster's positionality *after* the “mirror stage” — a complex move combining ascent to *masculine* subjecthood and descent to an inferior, deformed creature. The monster subjects himself to the logic of the specular relation based on this self-recognition and follows the rule of

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15) See translator's notes in Lacan, *Écrits*, ix-x, as well as chapter 1, “The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience,” 1-7; See also Althusser, 127-186.

the symbolic father (the “victor”). He negotiates with his father whom he learns to call his “master” and “natural lord and king.” Mirroring him uncannily, he demands “his own” woman. When his demand is ultimately rejected, the Oedipal son then challenges Victor by depriving him of his bride.

In this masculine power contest, Victor and the monster each establishes or restores his sense of subjecthood through the phantasm of a female object. This is clearly manifested in the course of the monster’s identity construction: first, the monster enters the symbolic realm, i.e., language acquisition, through Safie; second, his murder of William is bound up with his discovery of the ideal woman in the portrait of Victor’s dead mother; and finally, he insists upon possessing *his* woman, a determination fueled by a sleeping Justine Moritz. The monster’s observation of Justine illustrates his longing for a [m]other as much as for the woman he faces:

[...] she [Justine] was young, not indeed so beautiful as her whose portrait I held, but of an agreeable aspect and blooming in the loveliness of youth and health. Here, I thought, is one of those whose [joy-imparting] smiles are bestowed on all but me. [And then I bent over her and whispered, ‘Awake, fairest, thy lover is near — he who would give his life but to obtain one look of affection from thine eyes; my beloved, awake!’] (II. 8. 170 [16. 188])

The Sadean position the monster assumes (as the victim’s name alludes) allows him to take the aggressive role of possessing and fetishizing women. He becomes madly violent when he faces the possibility of Justine’s rejection of his imagined partnership: “The thought was madness; it stirred the fiend within me — not I, but she, shall suffer; the murder I had committed because I am forever robbed of all that she could give me, she

shall atone. The crime has its source in her; be hers the punishment" [188]. Obsessed with his self-aggrandizing illusion, he cannot bear her existence to be independent from or indifferent to him, so he condemns her to sleep forever and not to interfere with his fantasy space. The monster's psychotic response is to displace the possibility of rejection with an aggressive strike in defense of his male ego. Seeing woman alternately as redeemer and seducer, the monster now takes pleasure in exercising his knowledge of the symbolic system — "the sanguinary laws of man." Utilizing his knowledge of the legal system, he pits Justine against "man's laws" and codifies his own power over her.

The identificatory process of the monster — his self-representation through (self-) education — evinces a process of identity construction according to the elaborate symbolic order that regulates social life. The assembled texts that are grafted onto him (Volney's *Ruins*, Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Petrarch's *Lives*) induct him into the cultural logic of his society. The "sample" texts he comes across teach him social conventions, domestic affection, and its corollary, family romance:

But *Paradise Lost* excited different and far deeper emotions. *I read it, as I had read the other volumes which had fallen into my hands, as a true history.* It moved every feeling of wonder and awe that the picture of an omnipotent God warring with his creatures was capable of exciting. I often referred the several situations, as their similarity struck me, to my own. Like Adam, I was created apparently united by no link to any other being in existence. [...] Many times I considered Satan as the fitter emblem of my condition; for often, like him, when I viewed the bliss of my protectors, the bitter gall of envy rose within me. (II. 7. 157 [15. 175]; emphasis added)

Literary and cultural "quoting" leads the monster to learn and reproduce the

cultural ideologies embedded in the relentless, elaborate semiotic network. Furthermore, in the monster's mapping of social relations, the line between "a true history" and fiction is canceled out, resulting in his own violent inflection of the symbolic order. The monster instantly adopts the father-son dynamic, albeit ambivalently taking the identities of both Adam and Satan in his relation to God/the father/the master. At once vulnerable to and rebellious against the father's law, he conflates the porous boundary between "true history" and fiction. As a gendered subject, however, he "naturally" discards the link between himself and Eve and embarks on the restless pursuit of an imaginary bride who should perfectly mirror his deformity.<sup>16)</sup> Indeed, the monster, through the given cultural texts, perfects his role in the patriarchal symbolic economy, so much so that in contemporary popular conception he has "usurped" the father's name (thus becoming *both* Satan and Adam).

The growth of the monster's *male* subjectivity is manifested in a "masculine power contest," "the self-possessing quest and conquest," to use Ross' terms. The order of the monster's targets (William — [Justine] — Henry — Elizabeth — [Alphonse] — Victor) suggests a growth in his will to

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16) In this sense, some feminist critics' (re-)reading of the monster as Frankenstein's feminine other, thus linking him with Eve, seems a resignification at a dramatic reversal. See Gale Robin, and Gilbert and Gubar. The editors of the Broadview edition of *Frankenstein*, Macdonald and Scherf, argue that the monster identifies with Eve, juxtaposing the monster's account of the mirrored sight of himself in a pool with Eve's encounter with herself reflected in the pool in *Paradise Lost* ("Introduction" 30). Although Shelley's multi-layered allusion to *Paradise Lost* is striking, I don't think the monster consciously identifies with Eve; quite the contrary, his active suppression of his feminine positionality seems to be the point.



power, reflected in the strength of his enemies.<sup>17)</sup> This oblique quest for self-fashioning can only lead to one destiny — his becoming one with the master/tyrant. The immense tension between Victor and the monster demonstrates their “tenuous link to the signifying chain” (Brooks 214), the law of the Father. For example, the turning point in their relationship comes when the monster eloquently narrates his story of suffering, alienation, and despair. The monster gains sympathy from Victor even for the most brutal acts he has committed against other people by underscoring his position towards Victor — as a son to his father, a servant to his master, a creature to his creator. At the same time, the monster highlights his identification as a thinking subject who can operate in the symbolic realm (as Kant’s definition of an “enlightened” subject indicates), *and* his identification as gendered subject. He thus makes clear that he identifies with (the father’s) masculinity and distances himself from the mother figure (Caroline in the portrait), in seeking *his version* of the ego ideal: “My companion must be of the same species and have the same defects. This being you must create” (II. 8. 171 [16. 189]). The monster declares that his companion should reflect himself. As such, his stubborn demand for a female partner goes hand in hand with his growing assertion of his ego and his willful erasure of the unknown or other in himself. Yet the precariously naturalized gender norms implied in his demand — i.e., *his* female should be domestic, complying,

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17) From a slightly different angle, Veeder sees Victor as a personification of Percy Shelley with Oedipal (patricidal) desire against Sir Timothy Shelley (and, by extension, William Wordsworth and Godwin) and considers the monster, who ultimately drives Alphonse Frankenstein to death, Vivtor’s surrogate. While discussing the symbolic meaning of the order of the monster’s victims in detail, Veeder links Percy’s *Prometheus Unbound* and *The Cenci* to Victor’s deep wish for patricide. See Veeder, 149-153; n.10 (252-253).

and without any capacity of resistance or self-sufficiency — go unquestioned (a crucial part in the narrative logic) by both himself and Victor at the moment of the compact:

What I ask of you is *reasonable and moderate*; I demand a creature of another sex, but as hideous as myself: the gratification is small, but it is all that I can receive, and it shall content me. It is true, we shall be monsters, cut off from all the world; but on that account we shall be more attached to one another. Our lives will not be happy, but they will be harmless and free from the misery I now feel. Oh! my creator, make me happy; let me feel gratitude towards you for one benefit! Let me see that I excite the sympathy of some existing thing [...] (II. 9 172 [17. 191]; emphasis added)

Mirroring Victor's female love object as his ego ideal, the monster seems to know how to speak to Victor's masculine ego. The "reasonable and moderate" demand for his own happiness, based on mutual acknowledgment of each other's right to an exclusive heterosexual arrangement, rhetorically preempts any rejection from Victor. Yet the unexamined problematic that props up this mutual agreement is the hierarchized master-slave relationship on par with the "sexual" right a male has over "his woman." This contract between Victor and the monster satisfies the logic of the patriarchal male bond mediated by the exchange of a (silenced) woman. Still, even while he reminds Victor of his potential for revenge, the monster assumes a feminized position vis-à-vis Victor: "But I will not be tempted to set myself in opposition to thee. I am thy creature, and I will be *even mild and docile to my natural lord and king*, if thou wilt also perform thy part, the which thou owest me" (II. 2. 128 [145-6]; emphasis added). Anchored by the logic of natural law and the

hom(m)osocial contract (in Irigaray's term), male rivalry, and social order, this offer of a truce is what Victor cannot refuse, because it carefully draws upon their mutual respect for the hierarchized "boundary." With both of them acknowledging mutual power (/sympathy) over each other, they make a contract based on their commonality — that is, their position as (potential) patriarchs. They reach an agreement that the monster, a male who has come of age, is entitled to exclusive possession of a female of "his kind," the positivized entity of his desire. This boon will rectify their much-troubled relationship. Victor must admit that the monster's suggestion is a perfect solution to their volatile, unpredictable relationship, especially compared to the destructive alternative, which the monster has demonstrated both his will and capacity to realize. It is as if, in the name of humanistic interdependency, the monster offers a *de facto* colonial relationship that the colonizer cannot refuse until it threatens the perceived dominance of the colonizer's own race.

Accepting the implicit premise of this male-oriented compact fully, Victor embarks on creating the monster's "second sex": a female to tame the monster. Victor naturalizes the presupposed power imbalance between the sexes, burying the question of self-sufficiency or self-determination of the female creature. Pairing the potentially volatile monster to another seems the only way of containing the threat of invasion of civilized human space. But such a defensive strategy saps all joy from his work:

It was indeed a filthy process in which I was engaged. During my first experiment, a kind of enthusiastic frenzy had blinded me to the horror of my employment; my mind was intently fixed on the consummation of my labour, and my eyes were shut to the horror of my proceedings. But now I went to it in cold blood, and my heart often sickened at the work of my hands. (III. 2.)

Victor's growing anxiety about the creation of the female monster proceeds from the implications the monster's rhetoric has successfully concealed. His thoughts have nothing to do with the predicament the female being might face, however, but are concerned solely with a thoroughly masculinist-colonialist position. As the raw material is taking shape, Victor's anxiety is unleashed at the sight of the semblance of a female body, "the surplus" of which seems to exceed the male design. What dawns upon Victor is the female's potential will and the power she might possess that would exceed male control, especially the reproductive power of her body. Her procreative power threatens his authority, his identificatory point as the creator, and his controlling will. Coming full circle from the starting point of his scientific experiments, he is struck by the mystifying, nonnegotiable, and unfathomable female corpus which seems even more monstrous than the monster's rage. His decision to dissolve his agreement unilaterally does not come from his ignorance of the monster's potential fury. On the contrary, given that Victor and the monster utilize the same logic, Victor not only understands the consequences, but prepares for the sacrifice attendant upon his decision. For Victor, in other words, what is more frightful than renouncing his enjoyment *and even his existence* is the untamable otherness of female being — now elaborately equated with monstrosity *par excellence* — which, when unleashed, would bear unstoppable consequences.

Victor's and the monster's murders of each other's "brides" reflect the duplicitous bonding between them as well as their ambivalent feelings toward their brides. No matter how desperately Victor disavows the monster, he is forced to realize that they are *marked* by each other. Indeed, they follow each other's trails dutifully until the end. When the monster

stops chasing Victor, Victor follows the monster to the extent of becoming an automaton in pursuit of the source of power: "I pursued my path towards the destruction of the daemon, more as a task enjoined by heaven, *as the mechanical impulse of some power of which I was unconscious*, than as the ardent desire of my soul" (III. 7. 228 [24. 248]; emphasis added). The dialectical cycle of the chase between the two could not end without the "annihilation" of them both.

#### 4. Between the Mother and the Monster

Who is behind this whole web of the monstrous story? Ever since the author's identity became known, *Frankenstein* has drawn particular attention because of its bold original theme (including parthenogenesis), which defied the conventional realms of female writing. On the other hand, along with its overt theme of reproduction and yearning for domestic affection, the novel is fatally marked by the near-conspiratorial obliteration of the female characters one after another (Caroline Beaufort Frankenstein, Justine Moritz, the monster's "bride," and Elizabeth Lavenza). These otherworldly female characters illustrate an idealized and fetishized inflection of femininity, exemplified in descriptions such as "fairer than a garden rose among dark-leaved brambles" and "a creature who seemed to shed radiance from her looks and whose form and motions were lighter than the chamois of the hills." Why are all of the female characters in the novel obliterated? How might the writer's gender play a part in explaining this question?

Figures of femininity work as an empty operational axis in the narrative structure, marking the fear of loss, or more profoundly, the haunting desire

of the other. Against the backdrop of a lack of female subjects of speech, the woman writer invests in the fantasy of sexual and discursive divestiture from masculinism in a deeply ambivalent and displaced way — through the fantastic invention of a male monster who adopts and rebuts the logic of violence as the underlying principle of social relations. This spectral or psychical realm is not only built into the narrative overlay of the novel but is also present at the moment of its conception. In her “Introduction” to the 1831 edition, Shelley speaks of her dreamy conception of the monstrous story: “My imagination, *unbidden*, possessed and guided me, gifting the successive images that arose in my mind with a vividness far beyond the usual bounds of reverie” [58-59; emphasis added]. In Cassandran mode, she continues,

I saw — with shut eyes, but acute mental vision — I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside the thing he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half-vital motion. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous mechanism of the Creator of the world. His success would terrify the artist; he would rush away from his odious handiwork, horror-stricken. [...] He sleeps; but he is awakened; he opens his eyes; behold, the horrid thing stands at his bedside, opening his curtains and looking on him with yellow, watery, but speculative eyes. [59]

This “mental vision” comes with a peculiar interplay of opening and closing eyes: the author’s eyes close, and when her protagonist’s eyes and those of his automaton-like creature open, so does the door to the twilight zone, the key to which is Shelley’s “unbidden” imagination. Yet, instead of

positioning herself as the master-author, Shelley, through this dream perspective, sets herself up as a point of gaze, which traverses the “parent” impregnating a story to the artist, her creation, and in turn, to *his* creature. This almost apparitional perspective finally locates the interlocked gazes of the artist/ “father” and his creature. Contrary to the Wordsworthian mode of projecting a blessed babe, this mental vision investigates the nature of the field of vision itself, in which the “parent” fantasizes the child looking at its own “birth.”

To this specular scene, I want to juxtapose an instance where Percy Shelley's glimpse of otherworldly space is foregrounded. On June 19, 1816, the very night the ghost story contest was agreed upon by Mary Shelley, Percy Shelley, Byron, and Polidori, Percy displayed an odd behavior as recounted in Polidori:<sup>18)</sup>

Twelve o'clock really began to talk ghostly. [lord] B[ Byron] repeated some verses of Coleridge's "Christabel," of the witch's breast;

...

Beneath the lamp the lady bowed,  
 And slowly rolled her eyes around;  
 Then drawing in her breath aloud  
 Like one that shuddered, she unbound  
 The cincture from beneath her breast;  
 Her silken robe, and inner vest  
 Dropt to her feet, and in full view,  
 Behold! her [Geraldine's] bosom and half her side —

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18)The following is Polidori's account of the night when Mary Shelley, Byron, Polidori, and Percy Shelley decided each to compose a ghost story. See Polidori, 128.

Are lean and old and foul of hue.  
O shield her! shield sweet Christabel!

When silence ensued, and [Percy] Shelley, suddenly shrieking, and putting his hands to his head, ran out of the room with a candle. Threw water on his face, and after gave him ether.

*He was looking at Mrs. Shelley, and suddenly thought of a woman he had heard of who had eyes instead of nipples, which taking hold of his mind, horrified him.*(emphasis added)

Against the backdrop of Byron's incantatory recitation of "Christabel," Percy either stages a dramatic performance in tune with the poetic modality, or more likely, displays a sudden outburst of anxiety over the encroachment of the active force of a female body, not just a passive space for masculine fantasy.<sup>19)</sup> "Christabel," of course, is a ghost story that revolves around the question of maternal desire, "the duplicity of the female body" or "fantastic exchanges of" two women,<sup>20)</sup> all of which can be linked to maternal desire and the gaze of the primal scene. To quote the famous lines from "Christabel," what could be a sight "to be dreamed of ... [but] not to tell," or what could be the content of Geraldine's speech to the phantom of Christabel's mother, "Off, wandering mother! peak and pine"? The threat of the ostentatious gaze looking back is what Percy sees in Mary's breasts, a

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19) In a different context, Leask points out Percy Shelley's fear of the female gaze, quoting Medwin: "a beautiful woman 'looking down on him with four eyes, two of which were in the centre of her uncovered breasts' ... he 'conjure[s] up some frightful woman of an acquaintance of his at home, a kind of Medusa, who was suspected of having eyes in her breasts'" (Medwin 258; Leask, 1992 [2], 57).

20) See Swann 142; 146.



curiously reticulated version of the primal scene. Not only does the child recollect the putative sight, but is also caught up in the fantastic web of the gazes — the child and the mother *looking back at each other*.

In the novel, the fantasy realm becomes of utmost importance when Victor returns to Geneva after having destroyed the female monster and been tried for Clerval's death in Ireland. He often enters terrain where reality touches upon fantasy and where the strange and familiar merge:

The past appeared to me in the light of a frightful dream [...] I repassed, in my memory, my whole life — my quiet happiness while residing with my family in Geneva, the death of my mother, and my departure for Ingolstadt. I remembered, shuddering at the mad enthusiasm that hurried me on to the creation of my hideous enemy, and I called to mind the night in which he first lived. [...]

[...] sleep did not afford me respite from thought and misery; my dreams presented a thousand objects that scared me. Towards morning I was possessed by a kind of night-mare; I felt the fiend's grasp in my neck and could not free myself from it; groans and cries rang in my ears. (III. 4. 209-210 [21. 227])

Within Victor's zealous enthusiasm, required for his project, was a seed of madness already planted? Did Victor invite the burden of fatality and mutability when he took on the role of Promethean heroism "for other human beings"? With a disrupted sequence of chronology and intensified effect of fatality, Victor, who once assumed the role of the "benefactor of mankind," who dared to become a creator of life, realizes that he is subject to forces beyond his control: "some destiny of the most horrible kind hangs over me, and I must live to fulfill it" (III. 4. 207 [21. 225]). Moving between subject and object, present and past, reality and dream, Victor becomes

merely part of, rather than a master of, the signifying chain.

Such a fantastic reversal could be seen as a culmination (of the intersection between the real and the fantastic) of the initial unraveling of Victor's conflict-ridden desires, when he resists going back from Ingolstadt to his native place, his family, and Elizabeth. Considering that Victor left home upon the death of his mother ("My mother was dead, but we had still duties which we ought to perform"; I. 2. 73 [3. 92]), the break he made was indeed critical and irrevocable. Now his native place becomes a fantasy space where his mother resides. Caught between the glimmer of two pairs of eyes — Clerval's "dark orbs nearly covered by the lids, and the long black lashes" and "the watery, clouded eyes of the monster" (III. 4. 208 [21. 226]) — Victor realizes that the cost of desire is inconceivably high. Yet, as if resting in the eye of a storm, he experiences the eerie feeling of "calm forgetfulness," a shaky balance between fantasy and reality, "a sense of security, a feeling that a truce was established between the present hour and the irresistible, disastrous future" [21. 228]. After Elizabeth's death, Victor sees in his dreams the "estranged" or dead family members living: "During the day I was sustained and inspired by the hope of night: for in sleep I saw my friends, my wife, and my beloved country" (III. 7. 228 [24. 248]). In Victor's psychical operation, reality appears more dreamlike than dreams themselves.<sup>21)</sup>

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21) Theorizing fantasy space, Žizek notes that "the unearthed fragment of experience is not simply the 'actual' point of reference enabling us to reduce fantasy to reality but, on the contrary, the point at which reality itself touches fantasy (one is even tempted to say: *impinges upon* it) — that is to say, the point of short-circuit by means of which the fantasy — trauma invades reality—here, in this unique moment of encounter, reality appears 'more dreamlike than dreams themselves'" (1991 [2], 218; original emphasis).

The void at the center of Victor's being is indelibly marked by the loss of his mother, for which the "objects" of his desire serve as inadequate compensation. Victor's feelings surrounding the death of his mother (of scarlet fever, from attending Elizabeth's sickbed) triggers his ambivalent feelings towards Elizabeth. The inevitable outcome of the exchange of one woman for another not only presents "an omen" to him [91] but a perpetual "void" [I. 2. 72 [3. 92)] as well. Thus the maternal superego might explain Victor's indefinitely delaying his return to the domestic scene, which requires his marriage to Elizabeth. When he does finally return, the first thing Victor notices is the portrait of his mother, the emblem which reminds him of the demand of the other. Depicting her as a daughter grieving her father's death (as remembered by Alphonse Frankenstein), the painting had been commissioned by Alphonse Frankenstein to commemorate the moment he beheld her as his wife-to-be, and it triggers the intervention of the dead mother at the moment of the *Unheimlich*:

*Six years had elapsed, passed as a dream but for one indelible trace, and I stood in the same place where I had last embraced my father before my departure for Ingolstadt. Beloved and respectable [venerable] parent! He still remained to me. I gazed on the picture of my mother, which stood over the mantelpiece. It was a historical subject, painted at my father's desire, and represented Caroline Beaufort in an agony of despair, kneeling by the coffin of her dead father. (I. 6. 106 [7. 124-5]; emphasis added)*

Fixed on the emblematic painting which captures his "father's desire" and the eternal femininity of his mother, Victor becomes a point of gaze from which to watch the unwedded Caroline who is about to meet his father-to-be. The inscribed meaning of the painting is, obliquely, the enjoyment of

Victor's parents, and the primal scene for Victor. It is already known that Caroline Beaufort, after her father fell ill,

attended him with the greatest tenderness; but she saw with despair that their little fund was rapidly decreasing, and that there was no other prospect of support. [...] She procured plain work; she plaited straw; and by various means contrived to earn a pittance scarcely sufficient to support life. [...] and in the tenth month her father died in her arms, leaving her an orphan and a beggar. This last blow overcame her; and she knelt by Beaufort's coffin, weeping bitterly, when my father entered the chamber. He came like a protecting spirit to the poor girl, who committed herself to his care, and after the interment of his friend he conducted her to Geneva, and placed her under the protection of a relation. Two years after this event Caroline became his wife. (I. 1. 64 [1. 81])

The specularization of Victor's gaze on the painting of Caroline Beaufort thus amounts to staging the "pure gaze" of the primal scene. This scene sheds light on the fantasy structure of origin itself. Zizek formulates:

The basic paradox of the psychoanalytic notion of fantasy consists in a kind of time loop — the "original fantasy" is always the fantasy of the origins — that is to say, the elementary skeleton of the fantasy-scene is for the subject to be present as a pure gaze before its own conception, or, more precisely, at the very act of its own conception. [...] The basic paradox of the fantasy consists precisely in this "nonsensical" temporal short circuit whereby the subject *qua* pure gaze so to speak precedes itself and witnesses its own origin. (1991 [1], 197; emphasis in the original)

Once the subject enters the symbolic realm and subjects the gendered

self to the law of the father, separated from the maternal, the subject's fantasy is structured by the desire of the (m)other. In Victor's relationship with his mother, Caroline is the driving force behind his (doomed) engagement with Elizabeth. Given that Caroline's last wish was for their marriage, Victor is aware that Elizabeth's desire for him had already been circumscribed by Caroline's desire. Precisely because of the maternal desire, Victor is incapable of motivating himself to (sexual) action with a woman, confessing, "To me the idea of an immediate union with my Elizabeth was one of horror and dismay" [10. 145]. He thus creates progeny by himself, excluding (any) woman from the act of reproduction. This might explain why Victor chooses to create a man first, but then destroys a woman before her "birth."

The structure of desire explains why Victor's dead mother erupts into his fantasy space, and why she merges with Elizabeth, when the job of "infusing life into an inanimate body" is completed:

The different accidents of life are not so changeable as the feelings of human nature. I had worked hard for nearly two years, for the sole purpose of infusing life into an inanimate body. [...] I had desired it with an ardour that far exceeded moderation; but now that I had finished, the beauty of the dream vanished, and breathless horror and disgust filled my heart. Unable to endure the aspect of the being I had created, I rushed out of the room and continued a long time traversing my bedchamber, unable to compose my mind to sleep. [...] I slept indeed, but I was disturbed by the wildest dreams. I thought I saw Elizabeth, in the bloom of health, walking in the streets of Ingolstadt. Delighted and surprised, I embraced her, but as I imprinted the first kiss on her lips, they became livid with the hue of death; her features appeared to change, and I thought that I held the corpse of my dead mother in my arms; ... I started from my sleep with horror; [...] I beheld the wretch

— the miserable monster whom I had created. (I. 4. 86 [5. 105])

His dream after finishing the creation demonstrates that the crux of Victor's desire lies between his mother and the monster. Amidst the blurry atmosphere of the waking dream, the duality of his action — i.e., giving birth and registering loss (creations of progeny by parthenogenesis and losing the “woman”) — encroaches upon him. Looking back upon the project's inception, Victor knows its visceral implications: “To examine the causes of life, we must first have recourse to death” (I. 3. 80 [4. 99]). The dead mother, the desire of the Other, comes back in the form of the monster. The dream also indicates Victor's anxiety over (the) woman who serves as a vehicle for his dead mother.<sup>22)</sup> He now intimates the double implication of his creation: he has reenacted the role of mother, and his uncanny “child” has the capacity to *look back* at him. It is not surprising, then, that from this point on, Victor plunges toward his downfall.

The operation of crossing gazes is crucial to understanding the dynamic of the Victor-monster relationship. There are compelling references to eyes / eyeballs / gaze throughout Victor's experiment. In describing his hard work at creation of life, Victor says, “my eyeballs were starting from their sockets in attending to the details of my employment” (I. 3. 83 [4. 102]). Upon his completion of the monster (whom he immediately calls a

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22) In the 1831 “Introduction,” Shelley also speaks of the German ghost stories that directly influenced her, one called *History of the Inconstant Lover*, in which the protagonist thinks he clasped “the bride to whom he had pledged his vows, found himself in the arms of the pale ghost of her whom he had deserted.” There was another tale on “the sinful founder of his race whose miserable doom it was to bestow the kiss of death on all the younger sons of his fated house, just when they reached the age of promise” [57].

“catastrophe”), Victor states:

I beheld the wretch! — the miserable monster whom I created. He held up the curtain of the bed; and his eyes, if eyes they may be called, were fixed on me.

[...]

Oh! no mortal could support the horror of that countenance. A mummy again endued with animation could not be so hideous as that wretch. I had gazed on him while unfinished; he was ugly then; but when those muscles and joints were rendered capable of motion, it became a thing such as even Dante could not have conceived. (I. 4. 86-87 [5. 106])

This “thing” with a fixing gaze begins to haunt him. The more he perceives the monster gazing back at him, the more he realizes the impossibility of escape from the gaze of the Other. In fact, his sense of control over the objectified creation is more and more eclipsed by his growing realization of the monster’s eyes which look back.

When we consider the operation of maternal desire in the monster’s mind, his “repetition” of Victor becomes compelling. Victor’s ambivalent relationship with his mother is replicated in the monster’s imaginary relations; like Victor’s, the monster’s desire is mediated by the (desire for / lack of the) mother. After seeing the portrait of Caroline Beaufort that Elizabeth put around William’s neck, the monster is struck by his desire for a (m)other. Through this “encounter,” Caroline/ Elizabeth is inscribed in the monster’s psychical trauma: the picture works as the symbolic register of the ideal feminine in the monster’s mind, propelling him to want (and at the same time to resist) his woman. The monster says to Victor of this encounter: “it was a portrait of the most lovely woman. In spite of my

malignity, it softened and attracted me. For a few moments I gazed with delight on her dark eyes, fringed by deep lashes, and her lovely lips” (II. 8. 170 [16. 187-188]). As soon as his fetishistic indulgence is checked by a sense of reality, however, the monster’s admiration for Caroline/Elizabeth is displaced into anger toward another woman — Justine: “but presently my rage returned: I remembered that I was forever deprived of the delights that such beautiful creatures could bestow; and that she whose resemblance I contemplated would, in regarding me, have changed that air of divine benignity to one expressive of disgust and affright” (170 [16. 188]). Thus the monster plants on Justine the portrait that provokes his complex emotions of desire and rage, as if to defend his indulgence in forbidden enjoyment and to condemn any interference with the operation of his fantasy. Justine should be put to sleep. In that sense, when he breaks Elizabeth’s neck, he also freezes his *objet a* into a fixed form (as in a portrait) and thus closes off his own fantasy realm.

After Victor dissolves the hom(m)osocial contract with the monster, he is guilt-ridden about his own “enjoyment” or a possibility of “sexual relationship.” For Victor, the dead mother, the desire of the Other, comes back in the form of the monster. On his wedding day, Victor “had been calm during the day, but so soon as night obscured the shapes of objects, a thousand fears arose in [his] mind.” The ensuing conversation between Victor and Elizabeth is vague and duplicitous. Victor fears the implication of the monster’s threat, “*I shall be with you on your wedding night.*” At the same time, it could be said that Victor fears female desire even more. What he has vanquished by tearing out the female monster’s flesh reemerges in the form of his own bride’s demand. Elizabeth’s inquiry, “What is it that agitates you, my dear Victor? What is it you fear?” drives him to say, “Oh! Peace, peace, my love” and “this night, and all will be safe; but this night is



dreadful, very dreadful" (III. 6. 219 [23. 238]). Victor himself may not know what he fears, as he keenly waits for something to happen — the fulfillment of the monster's threat. Every word Victor utters suggests the possibility of subversive reading:

I passed an hour in this state of mind, when suddenly I reflected how fearful the combat which I momentarily expected would be to my wife, and I earnestly entreated her to retire, resolving not to join her until I had obtained some knowledge as to the situation of my enemy.

She left me, and I continued some time walking up and down the passages of the house, and inspecting every corner that might afford a retreat to my adversary. But I discovered no trace of him, and was beginning to conjecture that some fortunate chance had intervened to prevent the execution of his menaces; when suddenly I heard a shrill and dreadful scream. It came from the room into which Elizabeth had retired. As I heard it, *the whole truth rushed into my mind*, my arms dropped, the motion of every muscle and fibre was suspended; I could feel the blood trickling in my veins and tingling in the extremities of my limbs. This state lasted but for an instant; the scream was repeated, and I rushed into the room. (III. 6. 219-220 [23. 239]; emphasis added)

Between Victor's conflicting remarks and hesitant gestures, it is not difficult to detect his deeply ambivalent attitudes toward the desire of the other. "The whole truth" of the return of the repressed, which Victor now believes he recognizes, is still only partly revealed, because he does not fully acknowledge the operation of his own fear and desire. Why has the thought that the monster might target Elizabeth not crossed his mind? Could this be the same Victor who "would not quit Henry for a moment, but followed him as his shadow, to protect him from the fancied rage of his

destroyer,” since he has thought that “the fiend followed [him] and might expedite [his] remissness by murdering [his] companion” [19. 207]?

To see the situation involving Elizabeth’s death in its “whole truth,” it might be useful to return to another critical moment. Just after Justine’s execution, Elizabeth speaks of an “abyss” between “falsehood” and “truth,” referring to the “edge of a precipice”: “Alas, Victor, when falsehood can look so like the truth, who can assure themselves of happiness? I feel as if I was walking on the edge of a precipice, towards which thousands are crowding and endeavoring to plunge me into the abyss” (II. 1. 122 [9. 139]). Here “the angel of the house” becomes the questioner of the true cause of the crisis (William’s death and Justine’s indictment). Interestingly, this passage also echoes one of Mary Wollstonecraft’s dire indictments of male domination: “not content with this natural pre-eminence [in physical strength], men endeavour to sink us still lower, merely to render us alluring objects for a moment” (*Vindication*, 74). While Mary Shelley’s passage somewhat obscures the feminist sentiment highlighted in Wollstonecraft, it locates the precarious space, the abyss or the edge of a precipice which Elizabeth evokes, where Prometheanism converges with monsterism, and where Victor and the monster together conspiratorially plunge her to annihilation. Here the text locates, through Elizabeth’s conscious blindness and unconscious insight, her desire, which exceeds Victor’s. Elizabeth’s uncontainable desire also explains the drive behind the monster’s murderous grasp on her throat, which amounts to the monster’s realization of Victor’s desire.<sup>23)</sup>

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23) Analyzing the events that culminate in Elizabeth’s death — from the monster’s ominous remark, “I shall be with you on your wedding night” to Victor’s discovery of Elizabeth’s dead body on that very night — one might employ

## 5. Between the Monster and the Cyborg

In the traditions of “Western” science and politics — the tradition of racist, male-dominant capitalism; the tradition of progress; the tradition of the appropriation of nature as resource for the productions of culture; the tradition of reproduction of the self from the reflections of the other — the relation between organism and machine has been a border war. The stakes in the border war have been the territories of production, reproduction, and imagination.

— Donna Haraway, Simians, *Cyborgs, and Women*

“We’re always killing ourselves to find out what we would be better off not knowing,” Malkah said. “Isn’t that the definition of a scientist?”

— Marge Piercy, *He, She and It*

*Frankenstein's* resounding and ambivalent ending, where Victor becomes something like an automaton, and the command-obedience relation between the human and its creation is overturned, signals a new era. In the

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Zizek's notion that “the fantasy erupts into the actual event”: “Where we would expect rapid movement, an intense, swift clash, we get hindered, slowed-down, protracted movement, as if the ‘normal’ rhythm of events had undergone a kind of anamorphic deformation. This renders perfectly the immobilizing, crippling effect the fantasy object has upon the subject: from the interpretive movement induced by the ambiguous register of symptoms, we have passed over to the register of fantasy, the inert presence of which suspends the movement of interpretation.” See Zizek, 1991(2), 91.

midst of postmodern cybernetic proliferation, the legacy of the (illegitimate) modern Prometheus is felt in our all-too-familiar path-breaking inventions and discoveries. The ethical questions that accompany scientific discoveries and technological advances — such as how to deal with the consequences or implications of groundbreaking scientific projects — often cannot keep up with the speed of the experiments themselves. What does the effects of Frankenstein’s anxiety-ridden experiment on “inanimate nature” amount to — a prophetic warning against technocratic society or a fatal crisis of the enduring Oedipal plot and organicism?<sup>24</sup>

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24) Addressing the blurred boundary between the human and the mechanical, or organic and anti-organic, some critics point out that the 1831 edition is more oriented towards a “mechanistic” view of non-human nature than is the original 1818 version. Mellor sees the shift of emphasis stemming from the change in Mary Shelley’s view of life after her experience with personal loss, and especially from her leaning towards fatalistic determinism in her later years. See Mellor, “Revising Frankenstein,” 1988 (1), 172 passim; also, see her “Possessing Nature: The Female in Frankenstein,” 1988 (2), 220-232. Poovey notes Shelley’s growing ideological and political conservatism. See Poovey, Chapter 4 and 5, “My Hideous Progeny: The Lady and the Monster,” and “Ideal and Almost Unnatural Perfection: Revising Mary Shelley,” respectively, of *The Proper Lady and the Woman Writer*.

In a similar light, Butler, in her study of the scientific discourse of the period, traces evolutionist William Lawrence’s influence on the first edition of *Frankenstein*. Butler follows through the biologist and physician’s “mechanical” materialist ideas (vis-a-vis the spiritualized vitalism advocated by John Abernethy) and associates Lawrence with the scientist-hero of the novel in its first edition: “The fact is that in 1818 Mary Shelley’s portrayal of her hero is harsh, contemptuous, with a touch of Lawrence’s sarcastic debating manner.” See Butler, 12. Of course, scientists such as Erasmus Darwin are acknowledged in the 1818 “Preface,” and two conflicting views of nature had been in competition for some time when Shelley wrote the text: one, Paley’s mechanical worldview (in harmony with his

With *Frankenstein*, Shelley certainly travels a dramatic length, setting and upsetting preexisting intellectual boundaries — originating or ushering in a new discursive domain. *Frankenstein's* interweaving of apparently incongruous threads, mythic, fantastic, and gothic elements on the one hand, and surprisingly futuristic or scientific facets on the other, marks a profoundly groundbreaking attempt. What we consider common features of cyberculture, such as fantastic reversals, monstrous mutations, and multiple crossings, are latent in *Frankenstein*. As the novel's subtitle, "the modern Prometheus," suggests, Shelley mixes distinctively new, "modern" traits—later established as science fiction — with a creation myth. Embodying this mixture, Frankenstein demonstrates that the genre of science fiction incorporates a mythical leap by challenging the established truth, like an experimental scientific project itself.<sup>25)</sup> It is quite telling that in 1938, when scientist Hans Spemann launched a scientific cloning project for the first time, he called it a "fantastical experiment."<sup>26)</sup>

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Utilitarian moral philosophy), and the other, Davy's rejection of mechanical metaphors in favor of organic ones. See *Romanticism and the Sciences*, 14, for a detailed discussion of the two contrasting perspectives on nature in the so-called "Second Scientific Revolution."

On the other end of discourse analysis stands Haraway, who, with an anti-organicist and post-humanist perspective on nature, overturns traditional binarism. In her "Cyborg Manifesto," Haraway's critique of *Frankenstein* lies elsewhere: *Frankenstein* is still situated in the traditional Western discourse of self-making, Oedipal project based on the organic family.

25) Livingstone points out that *Frankenstein* problematizes any attempt at pinning it down to an inherent category or truth criteria but rather exemplifies a performative touchstone for generative acts of reading. In that sense, he states that "insofar as *Frankenstein* is 'science fiction,' it continually thematizes and gothicizes its own constitutive disciplinary problematics" (114; emphasis in the original).

*Frankenstein's* experimental or fantastical quality shows that just as the seed of upheaval is always planted in the beginning, *Frankenstein* attacks the very boundaries or distinctions it purports to be establishing. The very inception of the scientific experiment suggests that between the switching on of the flickering light and its extinction, there is only a phantasmic blink: “[when Victor] imprint[s] the first kiss on [Elizabeth’s] lips, they became livid with the hue of death,” as Victor’s dream narrative illustrates. When he faces a crisis after creating the monster (which Moers links to post-partum depression, 81), his view of nature is ambivalent: “When happy, *inanimate nature had the power of bestowing on me* the most delightful sensations” (I. 5. 98 [6. 117]; emphasis added). Here he apparently regrets his “animation” project, which implies an irrevocable departure from his position as a recipient of nature’s power. But by putting two senses of nature — *natura naturanta* (passive and complete) and *natura naturans* (active and in process) — together in one sweep (“the inanimate nature that has power [...] on him”), he assesses his ambivalent relationship with nature in the only form available to him: retroactively, from a standpoint at which the violence has always already occurred.

Along with offering a critique of the rational(izing) perspective on nature, *Frankenstein* blurs the distinction between human and machine. For example, Victor’s destiny-forming meeting with M. Waldman is described as follows:

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26) As the first scientist who proposed a plausible scientific project that can be called cloning, Spemann suggested taking the nucleus from a cell of a late-stage embryo, juvenile or adult, and transplanting it into an egg. Until it reached the point that an adult sheep was cloned in 1997 by Dr. Wilmut, that “fantastical experiment” went through many phases (*New York Times*, B 6, March 3, 1997).

Such were the professor's words — rather let me say such the words of fate — enounced to destroy me. As he [M. Waldman] went on, I felt as if my soul were grappling with a palpable enemy; *one by one the various keys were touched which formed the mechanism of my being: chord after chord was sounded, and soon my mind was filled with one thought, one conception, one purpose.* So much has been done, exclaimed the soul of Frankenstein, — more, far more, will I achieve [...]

[3. 96; emphasis added]

The Faustian desire for knowledge is seen as the key to the mechanistic side of his being; it is equated with a well-coordinated musical instrument/automaton, with one-dimensional purposefulness. He soon imparts the same mechanical will to his own creation: “With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, *I collected the instruments of life around me that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet.* [...] It was already one in the morning [...] when [...] by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and *a convulsive motion agitated its limbs*” (I. iv. 85 [5. 105]; emphasis added). By the same kind of initiating spark as Victor experienced during Prof. Waldman's lecture and with the same modality of mechanical coordination, only this time slightly less finely tuned, the monster is born. It is no surprise then that the monster, a full-blown demonic “thing” hovering with “half-vital motion,” turns out to carry the same tendency as the creator to pursue a goal single-mindedly (“mad enthusiasm”). By the time the monster's revenge results in William's and Justine's deaths, Victor considers the monster's threatening power as “the danger of his [the monster's] machination” (III. I. 180 [18. ]). Victor later calls the monster “my murderous machination” in the face of Clerval's death. Even more telling is that he

himself undergoes a kind of reversal of the monster's "birth." Under pressure, Frankenstein collapses and becomes something akin to a mechanism out of order: "The human frame could no longer support the agonizing suffering that I endured, and I was carried out of the room *in strong convulsions*" (III. 3. 202; emphasis added).

The "surprising effect of sympathy," a textual lure to a humanist interpretation, can also be reexamined from a cyborgian perspective. Shelley explains in her introduction that she conceived the idea of giving life to assembled body parts in the following terms: "Perhaps a corpse would be *re-animated*; galvanism had given token of such things: perhaps the component parts of a creature might be manufactured, brought together, and imbued *with vital warmth*" [1831 "Introduction," 58; emphasis added]. The vital warmth — the electric shock — that energized the body of the monster finds its equivalent in the cloning project of today: scientists, after taking a cell from an adult ewe, fuse it with another sheep's unfertilized egg from which the nucleus has been removed and jolt it with a spark of electricity for the so-far frozen egg to start self-dividing process in an embryo.

The linguistic thrust of "sympathy" not only goes back to Victor's original creation of the monster but to the author's inception of the novel itself. Shelley stresses the precarious and almost permeable boundary between the organic and inorganic:

[In my dream] I saw the pale student of unhallowed arts kneeling beside *the thing* he had put together. I saw the hideous phantasm of a man stretched out, and then, *on the working of some powerful engine, show signs of life, and stir with an uneasy, half-vital motion*. Frightful must it be; for supremely frightful would be *the effect of any human endeavour to mock the stupendous*



*mechanism of the Creator of the world.* [...] He would hope that, left to itself, the slight spark of life which he had communicated would fade; that *this thing which had received such imperfect animation would subside into dead matter* [...] (1831 "Introduction," 9; emphasis added)

Even God's system is seen as a mechanism; and the human being, created by that stupendous mechanism, adopts, imitates, and mocks it through his own handiwork. Moreover, a contiguous link is established between animating the human engine, putting flesh onto a (dead) skeleton, and putting a narrativizing form upon an elusive dream. In this light, the signifying process is "machinery":

Invention, it must be humbly admitted, does not consist in creating out of void, but out of chaos; the materials must, in the first place, be afforded: it can give form to dark, shapeless substances, but cannot bring into being the substance itself. In all matters of discovery and invention, even of those that appertain to the imagination, we are continually reminded of the story of Columbus and his egg. Invention consists in the capacity of seizing on the capabilities of a subject; and in the power of moulding and fashioning ideas suggested to it. (1831 "Introduction," 8)

Quite different from Wordsworth's formulation of "spontaneous overflow," Shelley strenuously points out "the dead matter" (material substance) that lies underneath linguistic structuring power. Yet, once this substance is transformed by invention, it becomes a sign. From seizing upon the capabilities of a subject to molding and fashioning the substance to releasing the creature as a floating sign, the process of writing is just like creating a "monster." The protagonist, the monster, and the novel are seen as "hideous progenies," which have become "the first of a new and hybrid

fictional species” (Spark 153). Certainly Shelley knew that her “hideous progeny” would have its own life over which she would have no control.

What is the function of a reader vis-à-vis this hybrid? Since “[e]ach tale interlocked within the tale touches its listener with the taint of monsterism” (Brooks 219), the reader cannot be immune to it: “... the fact of monsterism is never either justified nor overcome, but is simply passed along the chain, finally to come to inhabit the reader himself [sic], who, as animator of the text, is left with the contamination of monsterism” (220). Readers are not only tainted with monsterism, but, according to Haraway, they become (transformed — utopian and genderless) monsters:

By the late twentieth century, our time, a *mythic time*, we are all chimeras, theorized and fabricated hybrids of machine and organism; in short, we are cyborgs. The cyborg is our ontology; it gives us our politics. The cyborg is a condensed image of imagination and material reality, the two joined centers structuring any possibility of historical transformation. (Haraway 150; emphasis added)

Against the mainstay of “distinctions between organism and machine and similar distinctions structuring the Western self” (174), Haraway salutes today’s postmodern phenomenon of hybrid social relations that break down clear boundaries between machine and organism:

Unlike the hopes of Frankenstein’s monster, the cyborg does not expect its father to save it through a restoration of the garden; that is, through the fabrication of a heterosexual mate, through its completion in a finished whole, a city and cosmos. The cyborg does not dream of community on the model of the organic family, this time without the oedipal project. (151)

The postmodern cybernetic culture thus calls for the subversion of command and control and the undoing of (phallogocentric) origin myths and apocalyptic endings (175), because the futurist vision of the cyborg is about dispersion rather than identification (170), affinity rather than identity (155) and above all, about “transgressed boundaries [between the organic and inorganic], potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities” (154).

The surprising implication of *Frankenstein* is that the dramatic Harawayan reversal of the order between organism and machine is imbedded in Frankensteinian crossings. Indeed, the *Frankenstein* effect persists here and now, with a reversal of fortune, with virtual reality undermining strict boundaries between fantasy and reality. Are we all cyborgian monsters struggling not only to witness but to partake in historical transformations? Sparking tremendous cultural critiques beyond those of traditional political science, *Frankenstein* remains monstrous to tackle.

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ABSTRACT

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## 환영(幻影)의 출몰: 『프랑켄슈타인』에 드러난 환상적 교차점들

안 영 옥

지금으로부터 약 두 세기 전에 갓 열 아홉 살의 여자 작가에 의해 쓰여지기 시작한(1816), 소위 최초의 공상과학소설이라 일컬어지는 메리 셸리(Mary Shelly)의 『프랑켄슈타인』(1818년에 처음 출판됨)이 갖는 현재성은 무엇인가? 이 논문은 최근 영문학 비평계에서 19세기를 대표하는 소설작으로까지 추켜지는 이 소설이 괴물성과 주체성, 인간성과 인공성, 그리고 두 성의 역학이 만나는 경계선을 어떻게 설정하는지를 중심으로 살펴보고자 한다.

빅터 프랑켄슈타인의 “괴물”이 주체로 형성되는 과정을 논의하는 데 있어 이 글은 지젝(Slavoj Zizek)의 정신분석학론을 수용하여, 괴물성과 주체성이 만나는 지점을 유럽의 제국주의 논리를 제공했던 계몽주의 이론이 그 이면인 광기, 폭력, 혹은 타자에 대한 공포를 덮어버리려 하는 바로 그 지점으로 추적한다.

반면 남성 주체의 타자로 구축되는 여성성이 괴물성과 어떻게 엇갈리며 형성되는가를 점검하는 과정에서 지젝이 간과하는 점은 괴물의 남성성이 빅터 프랑켄슈타인의 남성 주체를 반복하면서 이루어진다는 데 있다. 이에 대해 이 글은 『프랑켄슈타인』이 제시하는 여성성에 관한 문제를



저스틴(Justine)과 엘리자베스(Elizabeth)의 역할을 중심으로 논한다. 특히 여성작가의 작품이 갖는 복합성을 소설 내 여성인물들의 구도와 모성(母性)이 괴물성과 만나는 교차점을 밝히면서 설명한다.

또한 이 소설에는 인간중심론적 담론의 문제점을 주장하는 사이보그론의 주창을 예시하는 점도 있는 바, 이 글은 『프랑켄슈타인』이 단순히 괴물에 관한 이야기가 아니라 창조와 피조물, 괴물성과 인간성의 정의에 관한 문제를 사유한다고 보며, 또한 이 소설이 어떻게 현대 과학의 지평으로 있는 생명복제(cloning)에 관한 윤리적 문제를 함유하고 있는지를 검토하며 마감한다.